Archie
ADVENTURE SERIES
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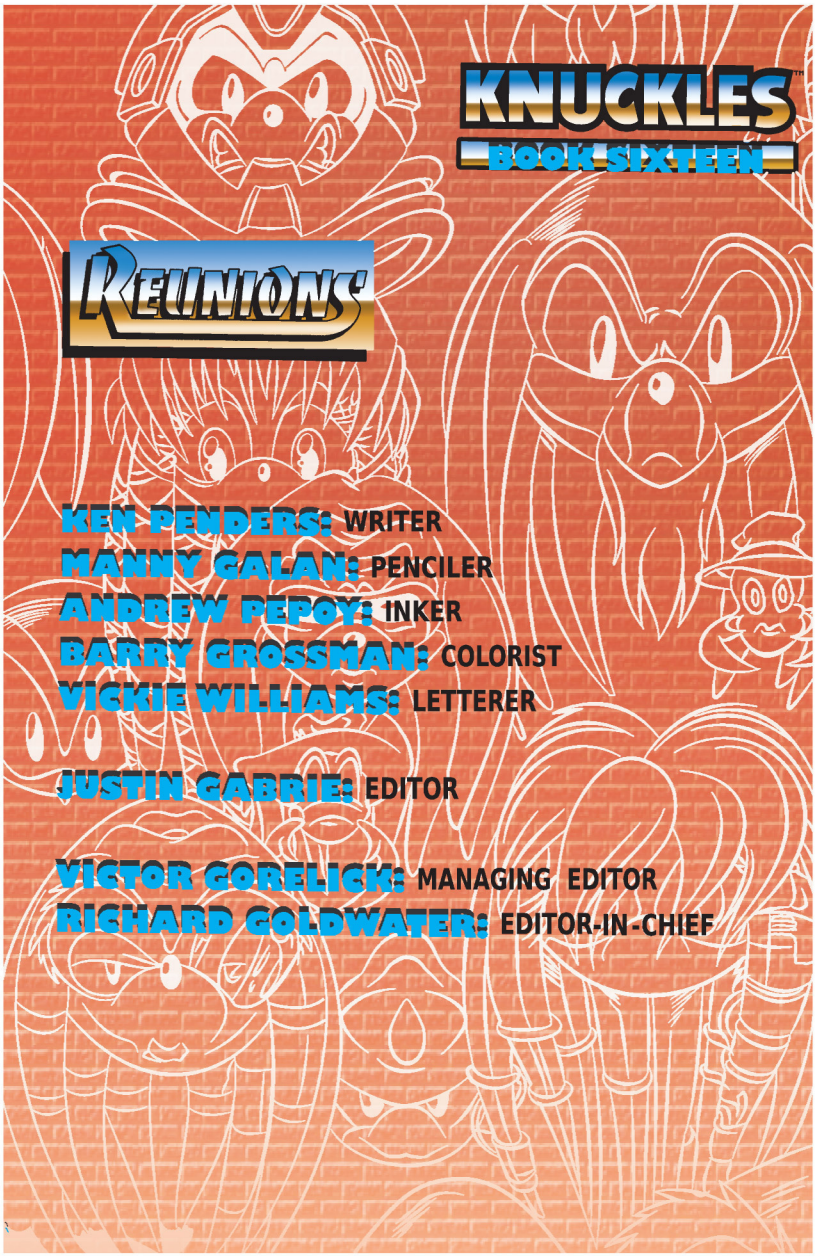
SEGA
KNUCKLES
THE ECHIDNA
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SPAZ PENDERS 98
PENDERS • SPAZIANTE • GALAN
GROSSMAN • WILLIAMS • PEPOY


KNUCKLES
BOOK SIXTEEN
REUNIONS
KEN PENDERS: WRITER
MANNY GALAN: PENCILER
ANDREW PEPOY: INKER
BARRY GROSSMAN: COLORIST
VICKIE WILLIAMS: LETTERER
JUSTIN GABRIE: EDITOR
VICTOR GORELICK: MANAGING EDITOR
RICHARD GOLDWATER: EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

BORN TO THE MOST NOBLE OF ECHIDNA HOUSES, THE LATEST TO CONTINUE THE FAMILY HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS GUARDIAN OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, DEFENDER OF ALL FROM THE FORCES OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD BEYOND AS WELL AS THOSE WHO WOULD THREATEN IT FROM WITHIN, HE IS NONE OTHER THAN KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA!

WHEN WE LAST SAW OUR HEROES, THE CHAOTIX HAD WITNESSED THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT CEREMONY OF THEIR FRIEND CHARMY, WHO REMAINED BEHIND AS PRINCE OF HIS OWN PEOPLE WHILE ESPIO, MIGHTY, VECTOR AND JULIE-SU RETURNED TO THEIR HOMES ON THE FLOATING ISLAND.

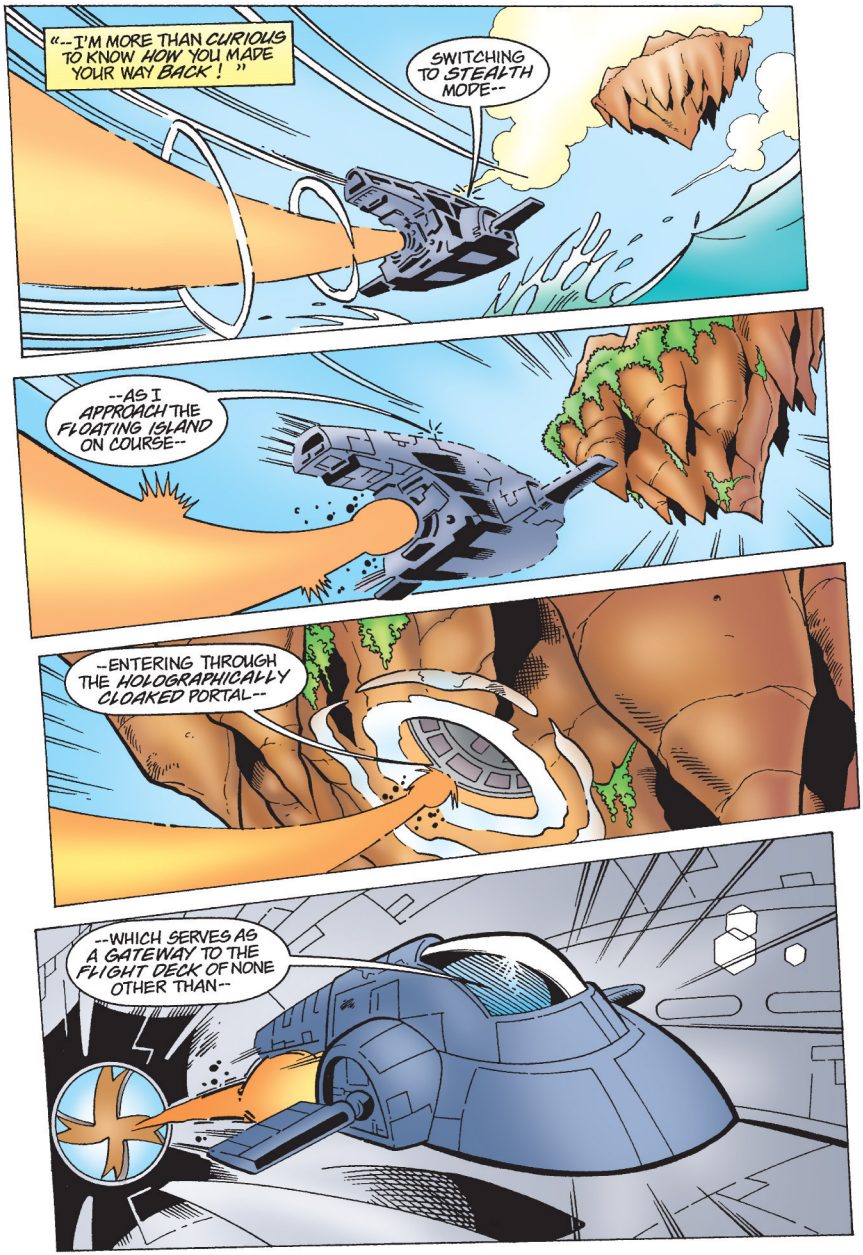
MEANWHILE, DEEP WITHIN HAVEN, LOCKE AND SABRE WITNESSED KNUCKLES HARNESSING POWER BEYOND BELIEF BEFORE VANISHING FROM SIGHT, PRESUMABLY RETURNING TO THE FLOATING ISLAND AFTER HIS DISCOVERY OF ALBION.

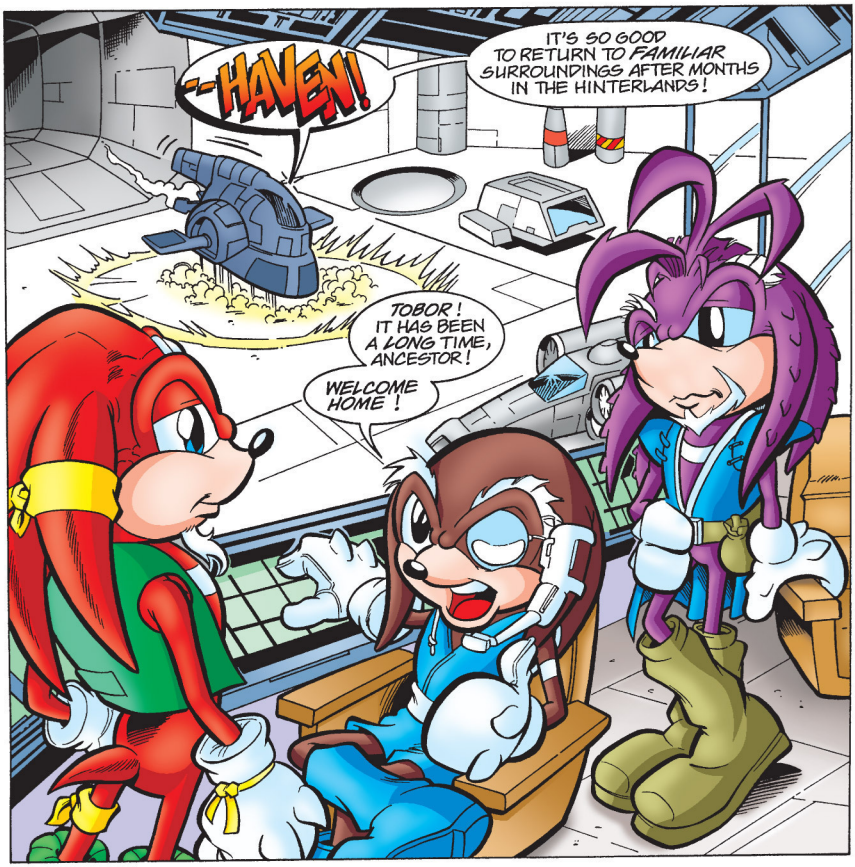
NOW, AS A NEW DAY DAWNS, THOUGHTS TURN NOT TO THOSE OF EXCITEMENT AND ADVENTURE, BUT OF FEELINGS OF LONGING AND SPENDING TIME WITH THOSE ONE CHERISHES, AS WE FIND LARA-LE THIS MORNING IN THE SANCTITY OF THE AURORIUM...

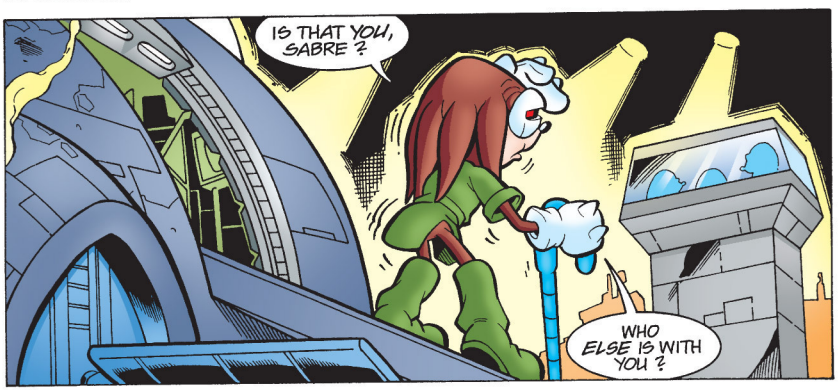
ECHIDNA TOWERS
BZZ-KAK!

KNUCKLES IN: REUNIONS
YOU'RE HOME!
MOM!

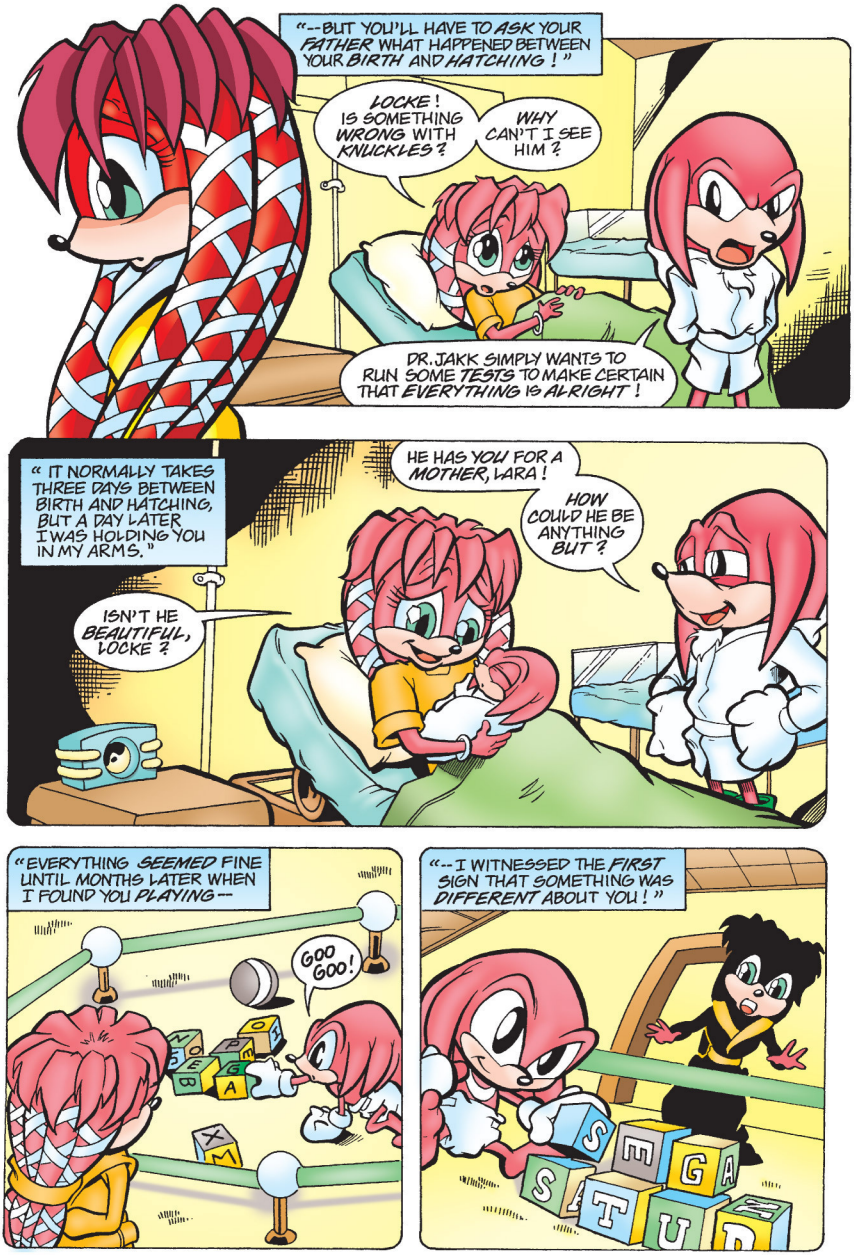
OH, KNUCKLES!
I PRAYED EVERY DAY AND NIGHT FOR YOUR SAFE RETURN!
I'M FINE, MOM!
REALLY!
HEY!
WHAT'S THAT RACKET OUT THERE?
Ahh! MOTHER HEN HAS ARRIVED!
HERE! THIS DRINK OF MILK WILL RELAX YOU!
YOU MEAN YOU KNEW THAT KNUCKLES WAS BACK?
WHEN DID YOU FIND OUT, WYN?
ALL IN GOOD TIME, DARLING LARA!
IN THE MEANTIME, WHY NOT GET CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR SON--
--WHILE I FINISH COOKING DINNER!
THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA!
AFTER THE WAY YOU AND GRANDFATHER ATHAIR DEPARTED, KNUCKLES--
SHE'S GONNA ASK! I CAN FEEL IT!

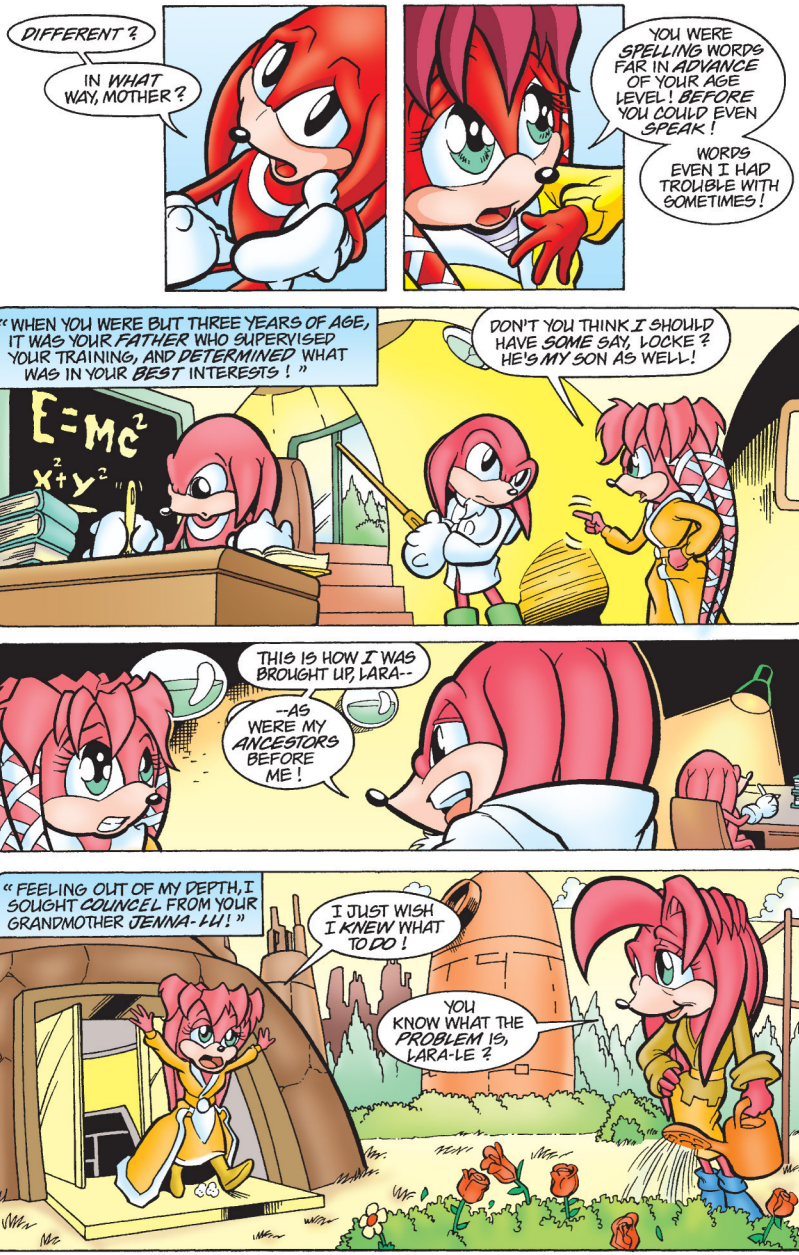

"--I'M MORE THAN CURIOUS TO KNOW HOW YOU MADE YOUR WAY BACK!"
SWITCHING TO STEALTH MODE--
--AS I APPROACH THE FLOATING ISLAND ON COURSE--
--ENTERING THROUGH THE HOLOGRAPHICALLY CLOAKED PORTAL--
--WHICH SERVES AS A GATEWAY TO THE FLIGHT DECK OF NONE OTHER THAN--

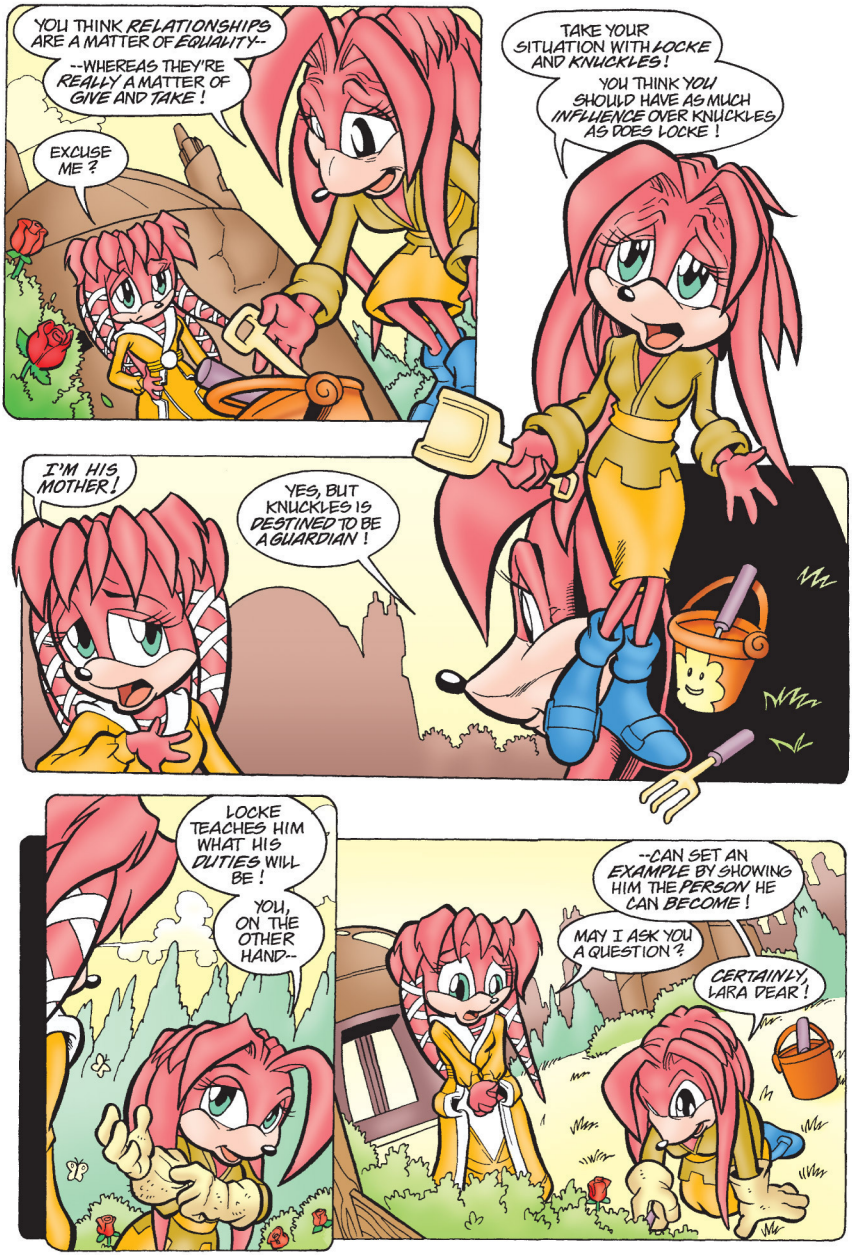

--HAVEN!
IT'S SO GOOD TO RETURN TO FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS AFTER MONTHS IN THE HINTERLANDS!
TOBOR! IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME, ANCESTOR!
WELCOME HOME!

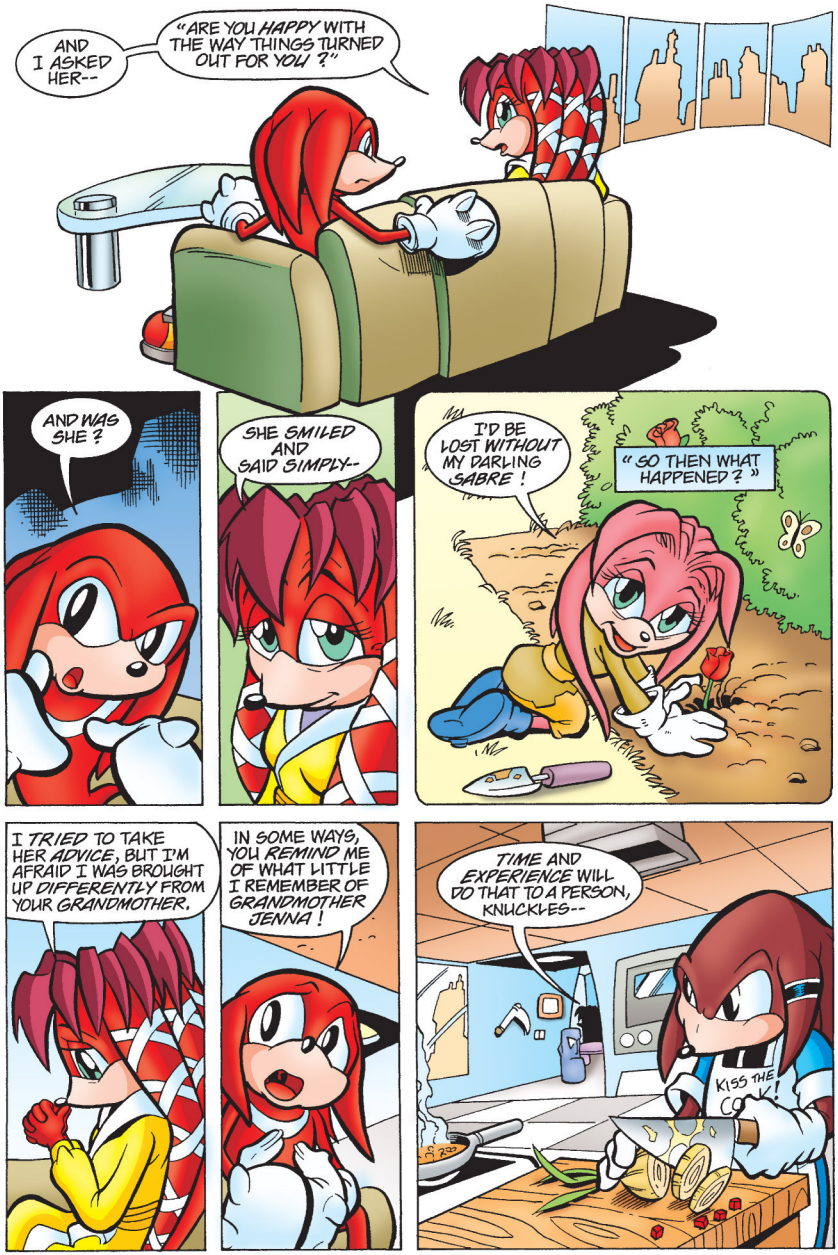

IS THAT YOU, SABRE?
WHO ELSE IS WITH YOU?

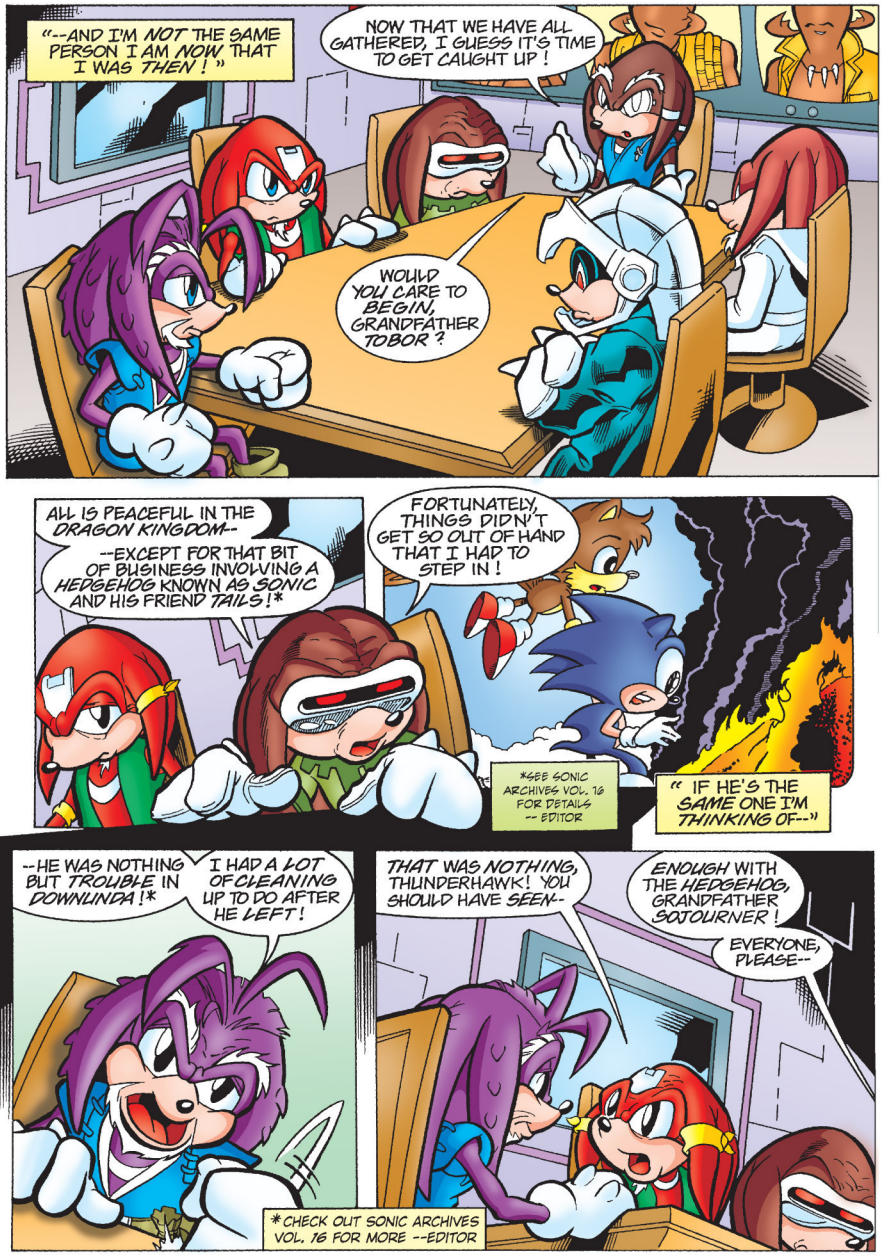
"EVERYONE OF THE CURRENT BROTHERHOOD IS GATHERED, FOR THERE IS MUCH TO DISCUSS--
--AND DECIDE!"
LET ME SEE IF I HAVE THIS STRAIGHT--
YOU RETURNED BY CREATING AN ENERGY TUNNEL OF SOME KIND--
--ALL BY YOURSELF?
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
I WAS HOPING--
--THAT MAYBE YOU COULD TELL ME!
AFTER ALL--
--WHO WOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT ME THAN MY PARENTS?
YOU WERE BORN THE SAME AS ANY ECHIDNA, KNUCKLES--


"--BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO ASK YOUR FATHER WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN YOUR BIRTH AND HATCHING!"
LOCKE! IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH KNUCKLES?
WHY CAN'T I SEE HIM?
DR. JAKK SIMPLY WANTS TO RUN SOME TESTS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT!
"IT NORMALLY TAKES THREE DAYS BETWEEN BIRTH AND HATCHING, BUT A DAY LATER I WAS HOLDING YOU IN MY ARMS."
HE HAS YOU FOR A MOTHER, LARA!
HOW COULD HE BE ANYTHING BUT?
ISN'T HE BEAUTIFUL, LOCKE?
"EVERYTHING SEEMED FINE UNTIL MONTHS LATER WHEN I FOUND YOU PLAYING--
GOO GOO!
"--I WITNESSED THE FIRST SIGN THAT SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU!"

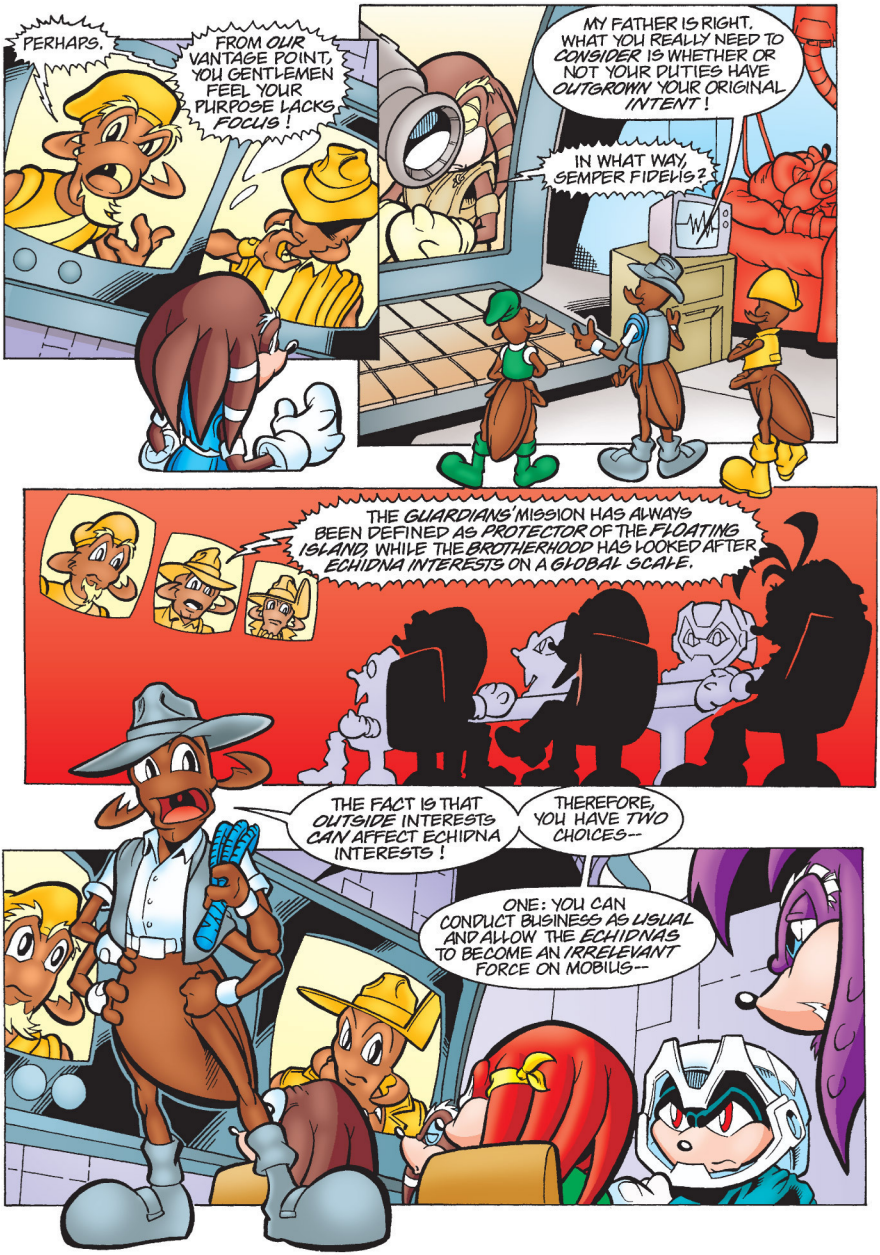

DIFFERENT?
IN WHAT WAY, MOTHER?
YOU WERE SPELLING WORDS FAR IN ADVANCE OF YOUR AGE LEVEL! BEFORE YOU COULD EVEN SPEAK!
WORDS EVEN I HAD TROUBLE WITH SOMETIMES!
"WHEN YOU WERE BUT THREE YEARS OF AGE, IT WAS YOUR FATHER WHO SUPERVISED YOUR TRAINING, AND DETERMINED WHAT WAS IN YOUR BEST INTERESTS!"
DON'T YOU THINK I SHOULD HAVE SOME SAY, LOCKE? HE'S MY SON AS WELL!
THIS IS HOW I WAS BROUGHT UP, LARA--
--AS WERE MY ANCESTORS BEFORE ME!
"FEELING OUT OF MY DEPTH, I SOUGHT COUNCEL FROM YOUR GRANDMOTHER JENNA-LU!"
I JUST WISH I KNEW WHAT TO DO!
YOU KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS, LARA-LE?

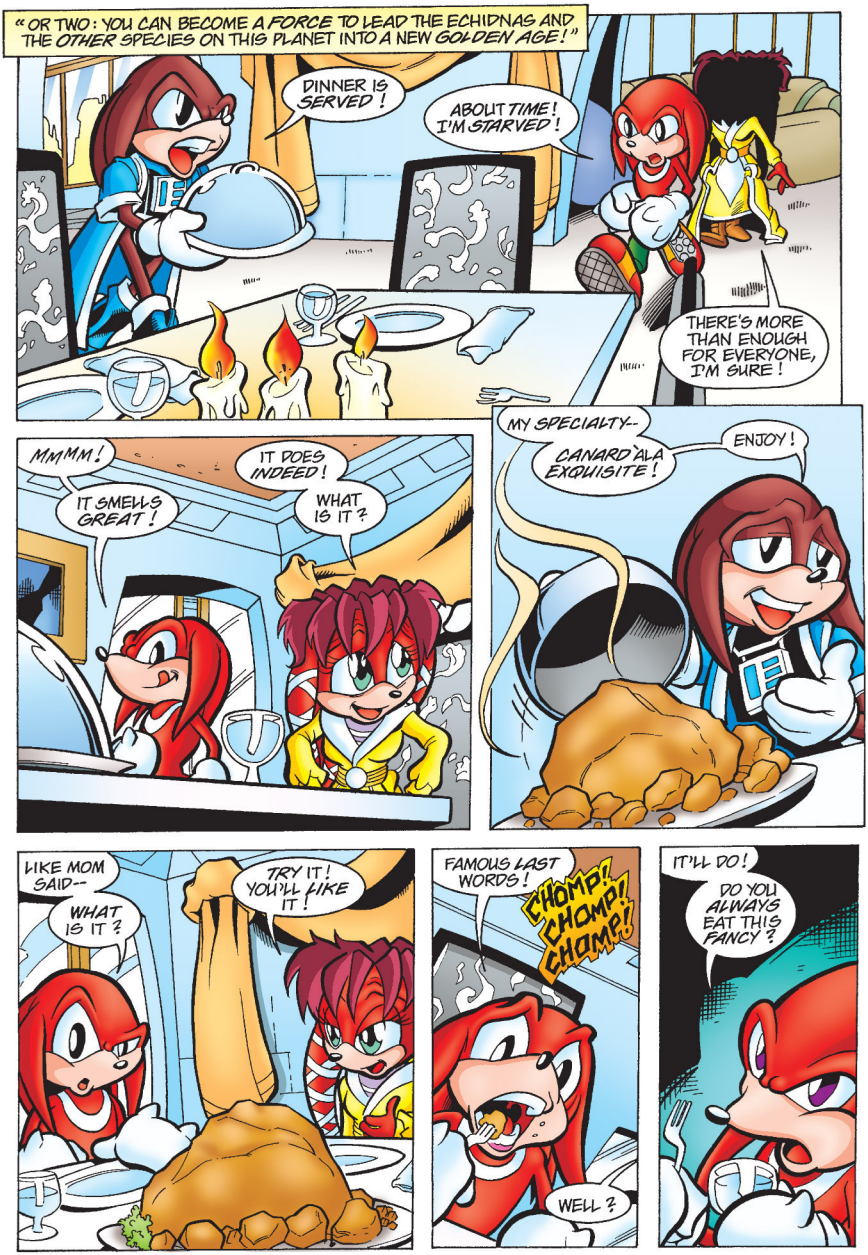

YOU THINK RELATIONSHIPS ARE A MATTER OF EQUALITY--
--WHEREAS THEY'RE REALLY A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE!
EXCUSE ME?
TAKE YOUR SITUATION WITH LOCKE AND KNUCKLES!
YOU THINK YOU SHOULD HAVE AS MUCH INFLUENCE OVER KNUCKLES AS DOES LOCKE!
I'M HIS MOTHER!
YES, BUT KNUCKLES IS DESTINED TO BE A GUARDIAN!
LOCKE TEACHES HIM WHAT HIS DUTIES WILL BE!
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND--
--CAN SET AN EXAMPLE BY SHOWING HIM THE PERSON HE CAN BECOME!
MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION?
CERTAINLY, VARA DEAR!

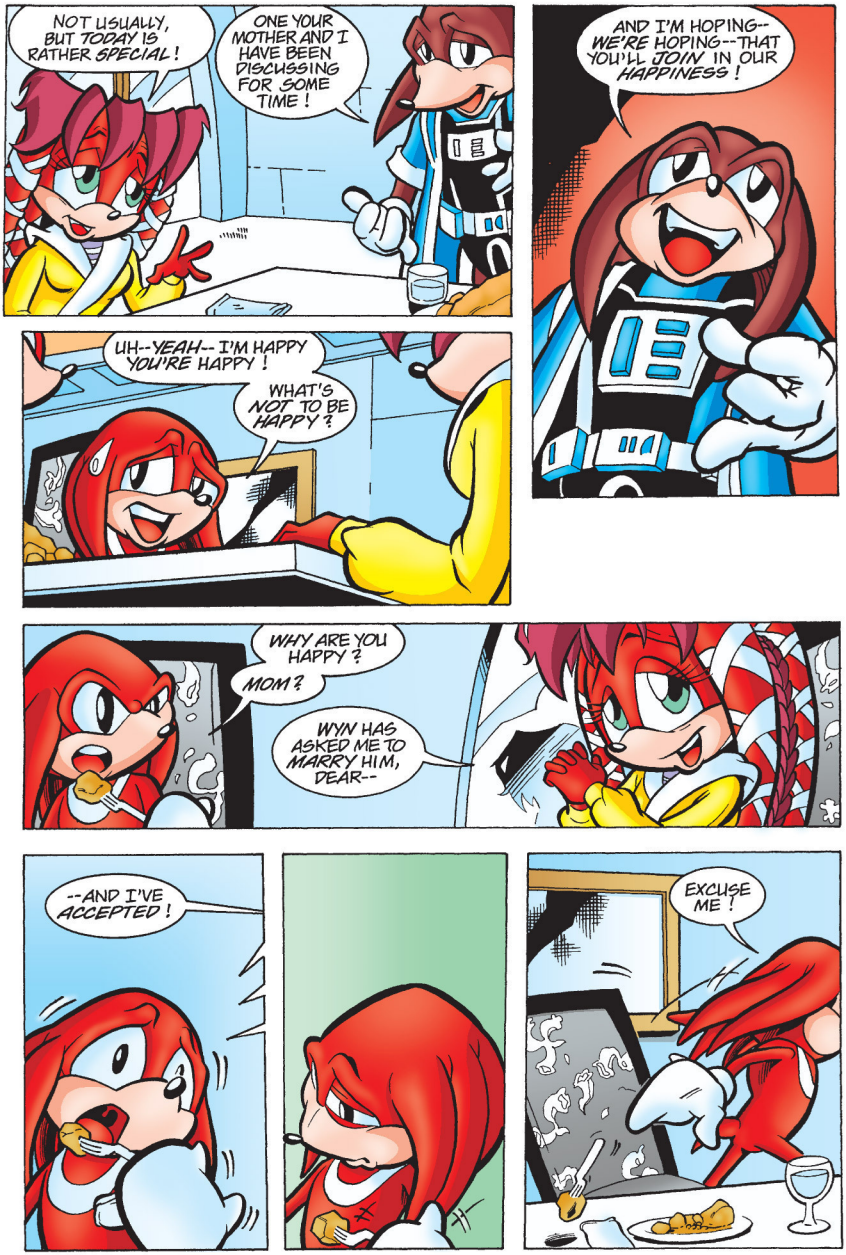

AND I ASKED HER--
"ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE WAY THINGS TURNED OUT FOR YOU?"
AND WAS SHE?
SHE SMILED AND SAID SIMPLY--
I'D BE LOST WITHOUT MY DARLING SABRE!
"SO THEN WHAT HAPPENED?"
I TRIED TO TAKE HER ADVICE, BUT I'M AFRAID I WAS BROUGHT UP DIFFERENTLY FROM YOUR GRANDMOTHER.
IN SOME WAYS, YOU REMIND ME OF WHAT LITTLE I REMEMBER OF GRANDMOTHER JENNA!
TIME AND EXPERIENCE WILL DO THAT TO A PERSON, KNUCKLES--
KISS THE COOK!

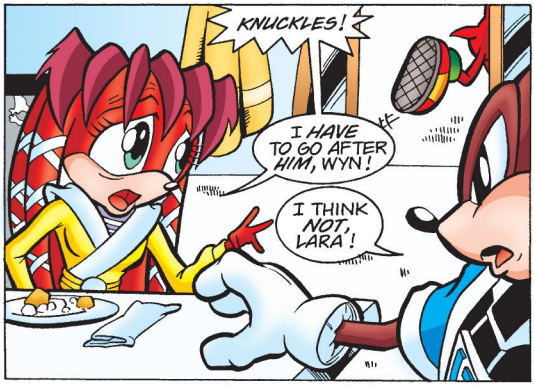

"--AND I'M NOT THE SAME PERSON I AM NOW THAT I WAS THEN!"
NOW THAT WE HAVE ALL GATHERED, I GUESS IT'S TIME TO GET CAUGHT UP!
WOULD YOU CARE TO BEGIN, GRANDFATHER TOBOR?
ALL IS PEACEFUL IN THE DRAGON KINGDOM--
--EXCEPT FOR THAT BIT OF BUSINESS INVOLVING A HEDGEHOG KNOWN AS SONIC AND HIS FRIEND TAILS!*
FORTUNATELY, THINGS DIDN'T GET SO OUT OF HAND THAT I HAD TO STEP IN!
*SEE SONIC ARCHIVES VOL. 16 FOR DETAILS -- EDITOR
"IF HE'S THE SAME ONE I'M THINKING OF--"
--HE WAS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE IN DOWNLINDA!*
I HAD A LOT OF CLEANING UP TO DO AFTER HE LEFT!
*CHECK OUT SONIC ARCHIVES VOL. 16 FOR MORE --EDITOR
THAT WAS NOTHING, THUNDERHAWK! YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN--
ENOUGH WITH THE HEDGEHOG, GRANDFATHER SOJOURNER!
EVERYONE, PLEASE--

-- WE GET THE PICTURE !
WITHOUT ROBOTNIK AROUND TO TERRORIZE THE GENERAL POPULACE, THINGS HAVE GOTTEN SOMEWHAT CHAOTIC !
HIS LIEUTENANTS WANT TO TAKE CONTROL OVER THEIR LITTLE FIEFDOMS--
--WHILE EVERYONE ELSE JUST WANTS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES AND MOVE ON !
IN MANY WAYS, IT MAKES OUR MISSION THAT MUCH MORE COMPLICATED, SABRE !
IT'S EASIER TO PREVENT ULTIMATE ANNIHILATION OR A COMMON ENEMY FROM USURPING TOTAL CONTROL THAN IT IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHICH BRUSH FIRE TO PUT OUT !
YOU ARE REFERRING TO ROBOTNIK'S LIEUTENANTS ?
AS WELL AS THE DISCIPLES OF DIMITRI !
MAYBE OUR COUNCIL OF ADVISORS HAVE A SUGGESTION OR TWO ?

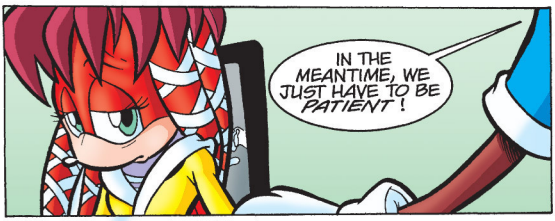

PERHAPS,
FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, YOU GENTLEMEN FEEL YOUR PURPOSE LACKS FOCUS!
MY FATHER IS RIGHT. WHAT YOU REALLY NEED TO CONSIDER IS WHETHER OR NOT YOUR DUTIES HAVE OUTGROWN YOUR ORIGINAL INTENT!
IN WHAT WAY, SEMPER FIDELIS?
THE GUARDIANS' MISSION HAS ALWAYS BEEN DEFINED AS PROTECTOR OF THE FLOATING ISLAND, WHILE THE BROTHERHOOD HAS LOOKED AFTER ECHIDNA INTERESTS ON A GLOBAL SCALE.
THE FACT IS THAT OUTSIDE INTERESTS CAN AFFECT ECHIDNA INTERESTS!
THEREFORE, YOU HAVE TWO CHOICES--
ONE: YOU CAN CONDUCT BUSINESS AS USUAL AND ALLOW THE ECHIDNAS TO BECOME AN IRRELEVANT FORCE ON MOBIUS--

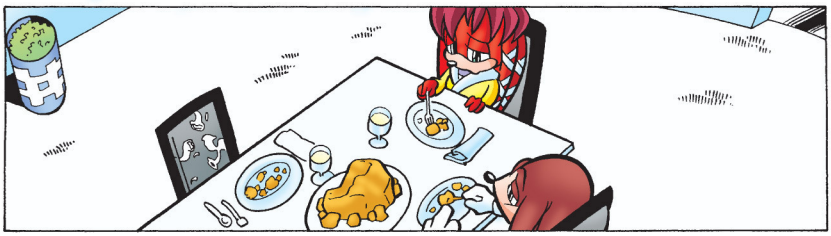

"OR TWO: YOU CAN BECOME A FORCE TO LEAD THE ECHIDNAS AND THE OTHER SPECIES ON THIS PLANET INTO A NEW GOLDEN AGE!"
DINNER IS SERVED!
ABOUT TIME! I'M STARVED!
THERE'S MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE, I'M SURE!
MMMM!
IT SMELLS GREAT!
IT DOES INDEED!
WHAT IS IT?
MY SPECIALTY--
CANARD A'LA EXQUISITE!
ENJOY!
LIKE MOM SAID--
WHAT IS IT?
TRY IT! YOU'LL LIKE IT!
FAMOUS LAST WORDS!
CHOMP! CHOMP! CHOMP!
WELL?
IT'LL DO!
DO YOU ALWAYS EAT THIS FANCY?

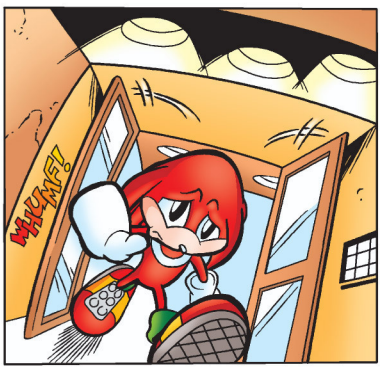

NOT USUALLY, BUT TODAY IS RATHER SPECIAL!
ONE YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING FOR SOME TIME!
AND I'M HOPING--WE'RE HOPING--THAT YOU'LL JOIN IN OUR HAPPINESS!
UH--YEAH-- I'M HAPPY YOU'RE HAPPY!
WHAT'S NOT TO BE HAPPY?
WHY ARE YOU HAPPY?
MOM?
WYN HAS ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM, DEAR--
--AND I'VE ACCEPTED!
EXCUSE ME!

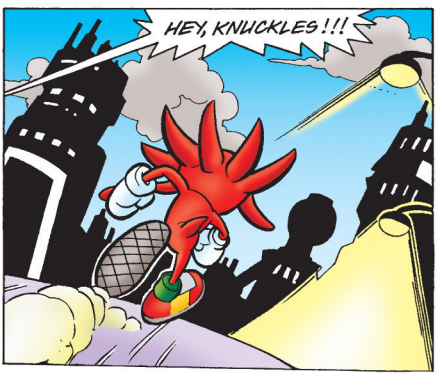

KNUCKLES!
I HAVE TO GO AFTER HIM, WYN!
I THINK NOT, LARA!

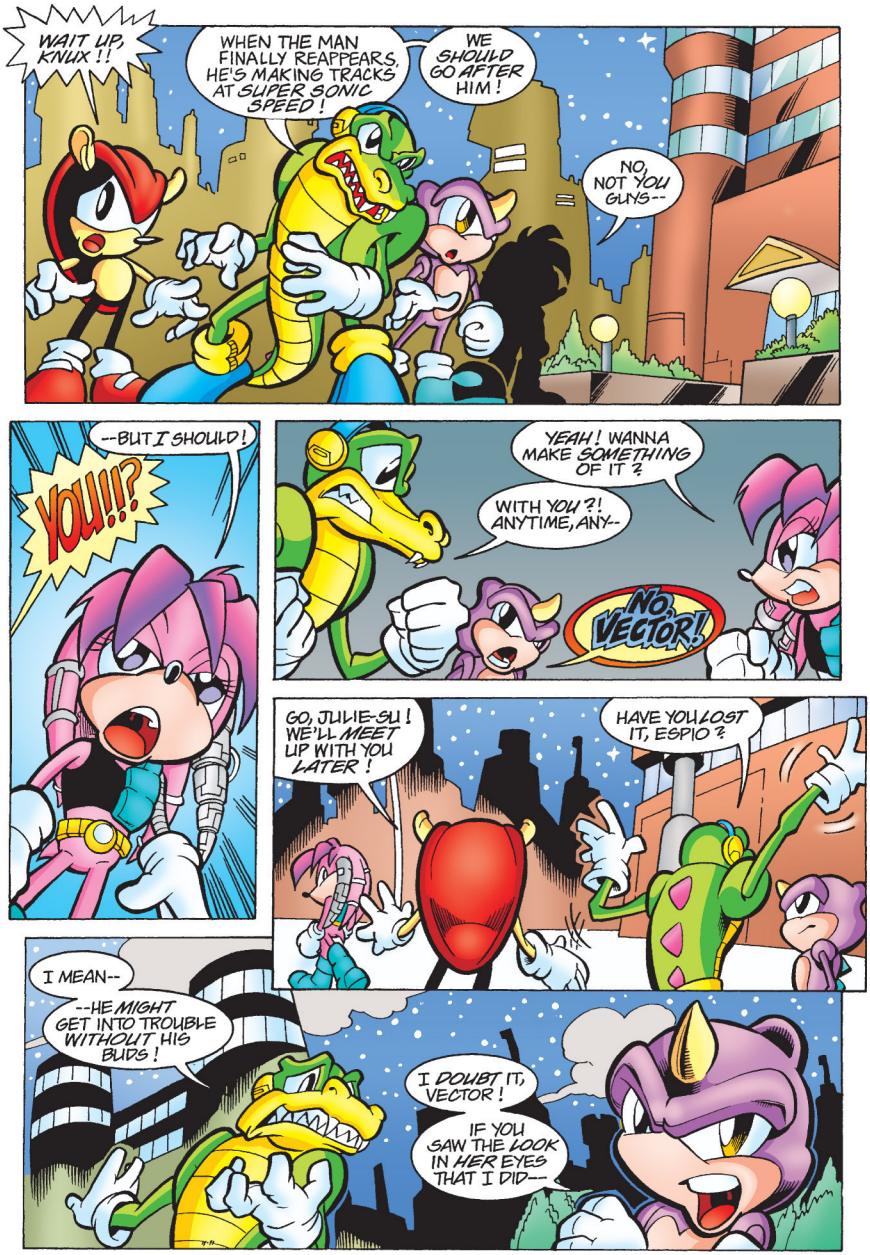
I SUGGEST YOU LET HIM BE FOR NOW!
WHEN HE'S READY, KNUCKLES WILL TALK TO YOU!

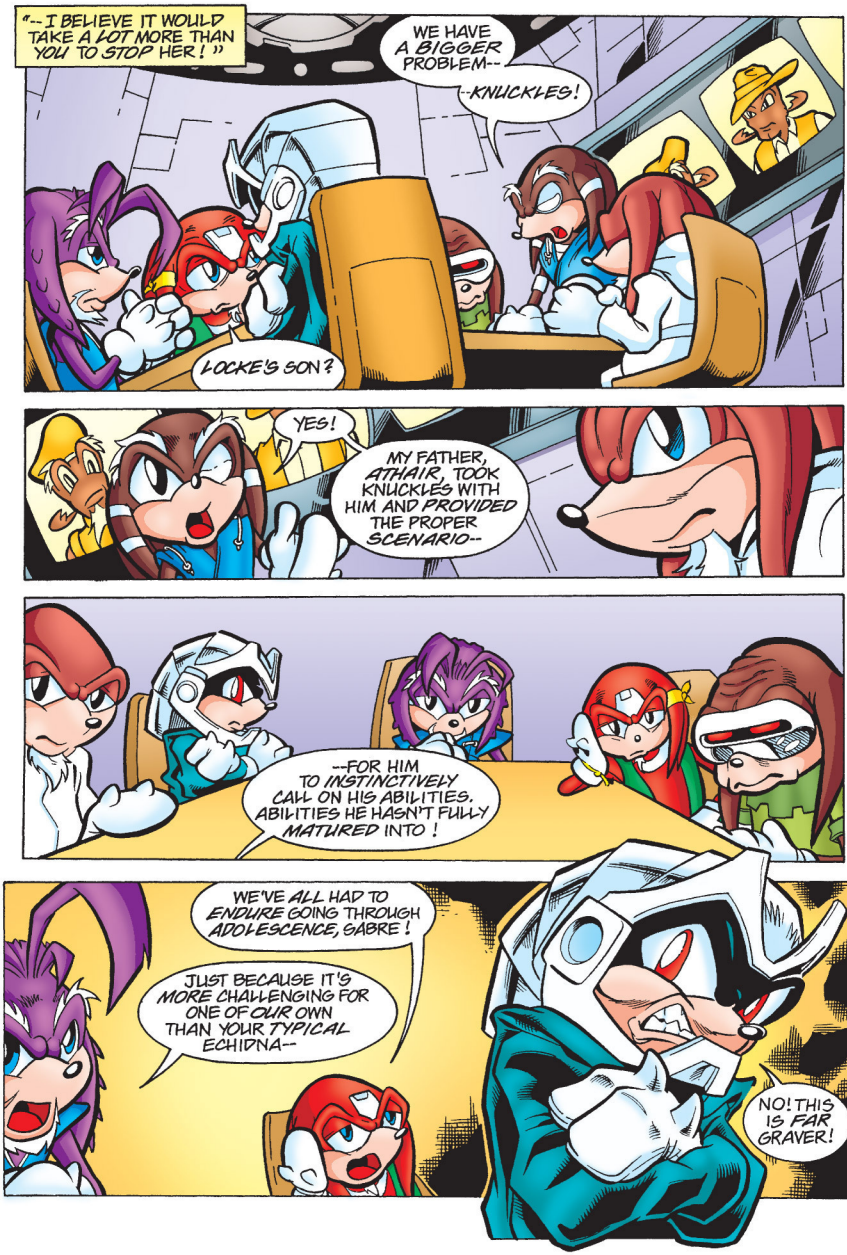

IN THE MEANTIME, WE JUST HAVE TO BE PATIENT!




WHUMF!


HEY, KNUCKLES!!!


WAIT UP, KNUX!!
WHEN THE MAN FINALLY REAPPEARS, HE'S MAKING TRACKS AT SUPER SONIC SPEED!
WE SHOULD GO AFTER HIM!
NO, NOT YOU GUYS--
--BUT I SHOULD!
YOU!!?
YEAH! WANNA MAKE SOMETHING OF IT?
WITH YOU?! ANYTIME, ANY--
NO, VECTOR!
GO, JULIE-SU! WE'LL MEET UP WITH YOU LATER!
HAVE YOU LOST IT, ESPIO?
I MEAN--
--HE MIGHT GET INTO TROUBLE WITHOUT HIS BUDS!
I DOUBT IT, VECTOR!
IF YOU SAW THE LOOK IN HER EYES THAT I DID--

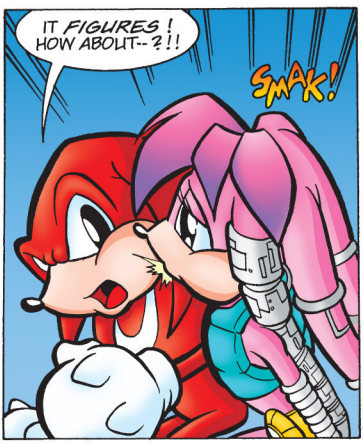

"--I BELIEVE IT WOULD TAKE A LOT MORE THAN YOU TO STOP HER!"
WE HAVE A BIGGER PROBLEM--
--KNUCKLES!
LOCKE'S SON?
YES!
MY FATHER, ATHAIR, TOOK KNUCKLES WITH HIM AND PROVIDED THE PROPER SCENARIO--
--FOR HIM TO INSTINCTIVELY CALL ON HIS ABILITIES, ABILITIES HE HASN'T FULLY MATURED INTO!
WE'VE ALL HAD TO ENDURE GOING THROUGH ADOLESCENCE, SABRE!
JUST BECAUSE IT'S MORE CHALLENGING FOR ONE OF OUR OWN THAN YOUR TYPICAL ECHIDNA--
NO! THIS IS FAR GRAVER!

GRANDFATHER SPECTRE!
ARE YOU AWARE OF SOMETHING WE'RE NOT?
I WARNED YOU YEARS AGO AGAINST TAMPERING WITH THE NATURAL ORDER FOR ANY REASON, LOCKE!
I DON'T RECALL YOU OBJECTING SO LOUDLY BACK THEN, GRANDFATHER!
BACK THEN I SPOKE BASED ON INTUITION!
NOW I SPEAK FROM KNOWLEDGE!
BASED ON WHAT?
FROM WHERE?
GO EASY, LOCKE!
IF SPECTRE IS CONCERNED, THAT'S JUSTIFICATION ALONE--

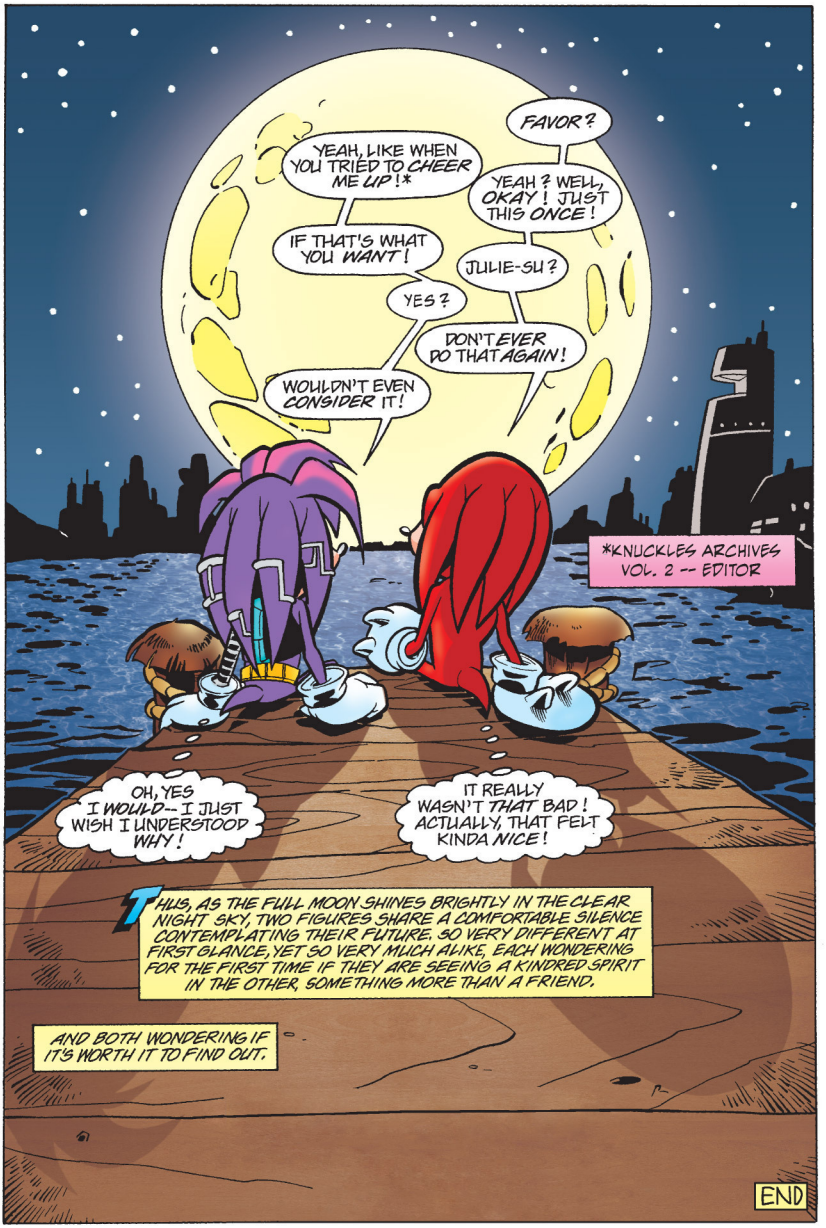
" -- FOR US TO CONSIDER KNUCKLES PROBLEM IN A MORE SERIOUS LIGHT ! "

HEY, THERE ! WOULD YOU LIKE SOME COMPANY ?
I'D RATHER BE BY MYSELF, THANKS !

YOU DON'T LISTEN VERY WELL, DO YOU ?
ESPECIALLY NOT TO YOU, THAT'S FOR SURE !


IT FIGURES ! HOW ABOUT-- ? ! !
SMAK !

WHY DID YOU GO AND DO THAT FOR ?
I'M NOT SURE I EVEN LIKE YOU !
I WAS SIMPLY RETURNING YOU THE FAVOR !


FAVOR?
YEAH, LIKE WHEN YOU TRIED TO CHEER ME UP!*
YEAH? WELL, OKAY! JUST THIS ONCE!
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT!
JULIE-SU?
YES?
DON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN!
WOULDN'T EVEN CONSIDER IT!
*KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL. 2 -- EDITOR
OH, YES I WOULD-- I JUST WISH I UNDERSTOOD WHY!
IT REALLY WASN'T THAT BAD! ACTUALLY, THAT FELT KINDA NICE!
THUS, AS THE FULL MOON SHINES BRIGHTLY IN THE CLEAR NIGHT SKY, TWO FIGURES SHARE A COMFORTABLE SILENCE CONTEMPLATING THEIR FUTURE. SO VERY DIFFERENT AT FIRST GLANCE, YET SO VERY MUCH ALIKE, EACH WONDERING FOR THE FIRST TIME IF THEY ARE SEEING A KINDRED SPIRIT IN THE OTHER, SOMETHING MORE THAN A FRIEND.
AND BOTH WONDERING IF IT'S WORTH IT TO FIND OUT.
END